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| Moderator | Note Taker | Participants | Date | Time | Venue |
| David Porteous | Julie Dickson | Local Residents | Weds 30th Aug | 12 NOON – 1.30pm | Portobello Library |

DP: Nobody’s name will ever be attributed to any of the things that are said we’d like to ask focus group participants to abide by that aswell and also not say what anybody else has said as part of these groups later on. Always our focus groups are conducted with complete respect for everyone so there are no right answers, no wrong answers as part of this and we just ask everyone to give everyone else the time to speak and respect their views even if they’re different than yours are, that’s pretty normal for us. We’ve done a brief introduction round everyone and if there aren’t any questions before we start, we’ve got a lot of information to go through before I can actually ask you any questions. So, are we all ok with the process so far?

Group: Agreement

DP: Ok, so as I said this’ll probably take about 10 minutes to go through, just to give you some background on where we are.

The reason we’re here today is that land on Westbank Street which is currently owned by the Council is being sold. Portobello Community Council and Portobello Amenity Society have asked for the community to be involved in the decision about what criteria the council should use to decide who the land should be sold to. We’re conducting 8 focus groups with local residents to help us understand how people feel about the various options. Before I ask any questions, I need to give you some background. So, you’ve got a map in front of you which shows the area that is currently being considered for sale, for which we’ve actually received some bids. Now, Portobello High Street is laid there along the South side and Portobello Promenade along the North, is everyone reasonably familiar with the area that we’re talking about there?

Group: Agreement

DP: Now, I’ll come on to what will happen in a little bit more detail but essentially what will happen is if this option, without Tumbles goes ahead there will still need to be 50 car parking spaces on the site for Tumbles, they will probably not be in the same place that they are now, which is just here (points to map) but the same level of car parking will continue. In the event that Tumbles is also sold then Tumbles needs to be relocated like for like somewhere within this red area. So that facility will close but a new facility which duplicates all of the current equipment that’s there will be built somewhere else on the site and the reason why that may happen is because the land that’s on the promenade is more valuable than land elsewhere on the site. So, as I said some developers may want to do that and some may not.

Right, so, the two different sites and what will happen. So Powerleague want to close their business on Westbank Street because it’s no longer financially viable and that’s why the site is being sold. Powerleague has a long-term lease with the Council and that won’t expire until 2088 so they’ve got long term financial interest in the site. Now they contacted the Council about selling the site for the first time on 2004 and we went actually as far as to receive bids from developers at that point but then we had the financial crash and it didn’t make sense, developers couldn’t afford to build any properties at that time. They contacted us again in 2015 saying the same thing, that basically long term the site needs so much investment (participant phone rings) …. Long term the site needs so much investment that it wouldn’t be viable for them to continue running their business there. So, as a result of that, Powerleague are saying they don’t want to run their business anymore the five aside pitches are going to be removed and won’t be replaced with other five aside football pitches. What happens to Tumbles, Edinburgh Leisure which is wholly owned by the Council and run as an arm’s length management company provides all the facilities that are there it operates Tumbles. As I said, there are two basic options of what happens to it. Either it stays exactly where it is with its car parking removed or it will be sold and it needs to be replaced like for like within the existing site and again the car parking facility stays there. So, in terms of the totality of the site what will happen to it is firstly, any actual development on the site is still subject to planning permission before we get to a planning stage there is a placemaking stage so the developer would come back to the community with particular options and ask for more feedback around what would happen. Prior to that is the decision about who the land is actually sold to. That decision is made by a Committee of the Council but it is informed by the recommendation by that group we talked about earlier which would be Council Property Officer and representatives from Portobello Community Council and Portobello Amenity Society. Ok, so, your feedback will go in to inform that process. Now, there are things we can’t tell you which are covered by commercial confidentiality and to be clear, I’m not being secretive, they’re so commercially confidential that I don’t actually know them either. I can’t tell you for example how much has been bid by the various developers and I can’t give you the details of what any one developer has actually said about the site. However, we will talk about the things that all various developers have said about how the land may be used as part of this. In terms of what will happen to the money from the sale that money will be split between the Council and Powerleague, unfortunately I don’t have the exact percentage to give you. Again, that is a fault on our part we’d hoped to have a Planning colleague along today to answer some specific questions about that and we don’t. That is not a secret figure. All of the money that the Council receives from its share of the sale will go to fund the development of the new Meadowbank Stadium. And that was basically decided at the very beginning of this process. So, any questions on anything that we’ve covered so far?

Group: Silence

DP: Ok, so, the first thing I wanted to talk to you about was the type of development that might actually be located on the site. There are a number of proposals and those proposals range from completely commercial use of the site, so you’d be talking about shops, offices, I believe there may have been a proposal that included a supermarket on the site, all the way through to mixed use and mostly housing development. So, whole range of different options for what might go in there. Basically, the total amount of development on the site pretty much determines how much money we get from the sale of that land. So, the more development there is the more money the developers are prepared to pay for that site and more development generally means taller buildings on the site so obviously the level of construction is a factor in this. Now, plans that we’ve received from developers vary between two storey buildings and eight storey buildings on the site so big range in terms of what people are looking to build there. And for comparison, nearby buildings in Portobello range from single storey buildings to eight storey buildings which is the block of flats which is just over there. In the event that housing was to be built on the site the Councils affordable housing policy requires that they would need to build at least 25% affordable housing on the site. This could take a number of different forms, we could be talking about housing association or Council properties to rent or we might be talking about more affordable properties to buy or some combination of the two. So, does anyone have any views on the kind of development they’d like to see on the site?

P: I work down in Granton and they seem to have just crammed buildings in next to each other… there’s virtually no… you can just about walk between them now and you know you’ve got peoples windows opening out on the next one. Is there going to be some sort of eh, layout that‘s going to not be as crammed because as you say you get more the more money you get and that’s what kind of concerns me, it’ll just be like a sort of shanty town, it’ll just be totally up in the air.

DP: Ok, again, I don’t have the specific details of any particular plans for that. What is the nature of the concern that you have, is that about the liveability of the space?...

P: It’s the aesthetics more than anything else because if you just cram it all in it just looks… to me it doesn’t look very good at all. It looks…

P: I don’t think it’d fit in with the sort of style of Portobello. It is all tenements and then if you drive straight in and you’ve got new, possibly eight storey blocks of flats as well. I think for me either of the options, the traffic is going to be a concern because as you come in, whether you come in from Portobello Road or Seafield its chaotic at the best of times. So if it was a retail type place that’s obviously going to bring a lot more traffic coming in and then obviously more houses, pretty much every household has at least one car nowadays so that’s a big concern for me, traffic.

P: Also as well, you’re saying, shops or another supermarket…

DP: I believe that we’ve received some interest in that yeah…

P: Just opened Aldis at the top of the road and Asda…you’ve got Tesco, Scotmid

P: That’s lost business

P: Then you’ve got the local shops, it would be a shame to do another supermarket in that sort of size.

DP: Is it the concern for local shops or is it about extra transport, extra traffic on the road…

P: Could be a lot busier with more shops.

P: Local shops as well because a mean to have a prom and a beach in a city, it is amazing to have that so…

P: I think they should do something to encourage tourism, that’ll bring money in to the area., rather than houses.

P: Tourist flats and stuff. Yes…

DP: holiday rentals?

P: I can’t see that a big high rise flat will look that aesthetically pleasing coming into Portobello you know it’ll just look awful, if you look at the Prom and you just see another big building obstructing it.

P: And they’re keeping the theme in with all green as well, it’s a shame to ruin by high rised.

DP: Ok

P: I think as well another supermarket, as you say you’ve already got them at the top f the street but if you walk along the high street you’ve still got a lot of local shops, you’ve got your butcher, you’ve got your deli and things, where we’re quite fortunate, a lot of places don’t have these wee local shops anymore, it’s still got that sort of local feel to it here, instead of being overrun with just big supermarkets. Especially supporting local businesses, small businesses.

P: Would there be a plan for a school, cos there’s so many new flats and new houses going up round this area and the schools are bursting because there’s so many new houses… I don’t know if that’s a plan or something for children just cos its….

DP: Its interesting...what’s normally required as part of any significant development is for the developer to demonstrate a level of community benefit. Now, community benefit is a phrase that covers a range of things and can be training, jobs that are provided to people who are involved in construction of the site itself or it can be about improving the infrastructure and public realm around it or it can be the creation of significant public assets like schools, so if we were talking about housing, this site is relatively small, in the event that you were talking about a housing development of 1000 homes say, it would certainly be the case that the developer who was doing that would need to pay for a school to be built for example. Again, because it’s difficult to say how many people we’re talking about it is difficult to be able to talk about what that community benefit might be. But a school, is there something else that you might be looking for in terms of community benefit?

P: Another sports centre, there’s another one along a bit, the swimming bit but another actual sports centre to replace the Pitz, a proper big one.

P: A gym or something?

P: I think as well to put a soft play, like purpose built soft play like they’ve got down at Leith, the old swimming pool, you’ve got lots of children here in this community so if there’s something purpose built and they could have parties there but have maybe connected to a gym, trampolines, especially if they’re going to take part of that. Just have half the site for young ones as well.

DP: Do you know that the Tumbles centre that’s there has a soft play at the moment? Have you used it?

P: Yes, I’ve got young children yeah. I wouldn’t like that to go away cos that’s really good. I don’t drive so anything in the community is good and a lot of things my other children have been to they’ve closed here and up to Meadowbank so it means it is more, it’s costly to get up there on a bus and inconvenient, whereas if it is on your doorstep you know…

DP: So, what I was saying in the event of either, Tumbles, the soft play will stay where it is or it needs to be replaced with a like for like facility in that area.

P: So we’re not losing it really?

DP: No, it would need to be rebuilt there. I don’t have details on whether or not one would stay open until the other was built or what that would be, we are way too early in the process to say.

P: Yeah, that would be a shame if they knocked it down and then it would maybe be a year or something until it would be rebuilt, that would be missing out, a big thing that would be lost for a while.

P: Even expanding it, I know Tumbles, I take my wee girl there but even for more older kids to keep the community like a centre that they could go to

P: A BMX court or something?

P: Something to keep the community together, especially for the kids, cos I know down there it’s really popular, they’ve got the gymnast downstairs and all of that and there’s a lot of kids from all of the areas that go to that.

P: Especially for the football, that’s where a lot of young boys go to play football. So hopefully they put something else back in there that’s going to …

P: Yeah, to take that away completely…

DP: So your concern is the loss of that for that particular group of people who might not have anything else?

P: It’s keeping them out of trouble at the end of the day. They go there, they play the football, the lights are on now until 10 o’clock at night they’ve upgraded it with the big lights so it’s keeping them off the streets and actually doing something they like. Taking that away, I think it would cause a bit more trouble.

DP: Ok…

P: I don’t know if that’s to do with… you know in churches they have brownie guides and boy scouts I don’t know if they could do a centre that you do youth groups or art classes or drama clubs so that it could be used… or dance classes that could be added on to Tumbles so that it is an extra space that could also be hired for parties or a venue for weddings, just because it is on the beach as well it’s a nice area, a good location.

DP: Ok, what I would say about what happens with all of this feedback we’ll include all of the feedback, I want to though give you a sense of what is likely to be possible. So, when we’re talking about expanding the community facilities at Tumbles I think that is easily within the realm of possibility. When we are talking about maintaining five aside football pitches or having large indoors sports facilites there, I don’t think that would be possible within the site just because the developers will want the land in order to build something different on it and at the same time we’re spending our money on the development at Meadowbank so it is difficult to… just making you aware of what is likely to be possible that’s all.

P:If they’re going to have the stuff at Meadowbank then I suppose it’s not that far away, if they’re going to do Meadowbank up and have a gym, football pitches and make it much better than it is, so I suppose if it is only for a couple of years you’re not really going to miss it too much if it’s going to be a big thing at Meadowbank but as long as there’s something there to do like a big sports facility cos there isn’t really, apart from Meadowbank, which isn’t really used that often, like it kind falling down, so there isn’t really anything apart from that there’s only Tumbles and the football pitches in this area.

DP: So, I suppose the question to everyone would be is there a concern about maybe development starts here next year but Meadowbank isn’t finished for another year and a half after that.

P: Is Meadowbank closing down is it? Will they close it for a substantive amount of time?

DP: Yes, they’ll stop I think December this year or January of next year and that will be the facility closed at that point. It will take a significant amount of time obviously to take everything down and I think we are looking at a year and a half two years before anything is finished on the site in terms of sports facility. So, yes a bit of a gap there.

P: So if they do knock Tumbles and stuff down then Meadowbank is going to be closed as well so there’s not really anywhere to go, where will you use for football say, if Meadowbanks closed? There’s Leith or the new football league at Marine Drive but it’s quite a bit away.

P: There’s such a housing shortage isn’t there so is it better to build housing here rather than a supermarket? Seen as there’s already enough shops. So maybe it’s better to have housing rather than commercial.

DP: Is it just the shortage of housing that makes you think that more housing is better?

P: It’s just that in general there’s such a shortage of housing in Edinburgh, that’s one of the problems isn’t it.

P: Especially if they’re putting them affordable as well. Cos I know here (point to map) there’s brand new flats been built there and they were going for about 400/500k because it is right out on to the sea, the view, so obviously, they were going for a lot and they’ve built a substantial amount. So, having affordable housing in with the housing would probably help.

P: If you put up flats/properties here it would be very expensive wouldn’t it because of the view and then you could put cheaper, more affordable housing maybe further back. I think it is good idea isn’t it to move this (points to map).

DP: Well one of the proposals for what might happen amongst those developers who has put in a bid for Tumbles as well is that the Tumbles site would move so that it would have its entrance on the High street, you may be familiar with the site, it drops off significantly as it goes towards the prom so it would be the case that you would walk directly in to what effectively would be a much higher facility because the land drops off. That is one of the things that’s been put in as one of the bids. If we think about that cos you’ve raised the issue. If we think about the promenade side there, how would you like the promenade side to look as a result of this development. So you talked about, the flats that are already there…

P: They’re really nice, they’ve got a nice veranda going out, it fits in quite well. I know yous are saying about the older houses and things but the do fit in ok as you’re walking along. I think you just have to be careful that it does all go together.

P: I think it shouldn’t be too high as well cos the ones right next door to it, the flats, they’re really quite high up so I think it would kind just look like loads of blocks of houses it would be quite… it shouldn’t be too high storeys at the front, if was going to be at least further back could be higher storeys cos you want to keep the nicer view on the beach, it’s not nice walking past and all you see is just big blocks of houses.

P: But your developers will want to get more people in because they’ll get more money so they’ll be wanting to go as high and as near to each other as they can, cram as much in which, as you say, gives you more housing but it’s the quality of the housing I would suggest, especially further back, I don’t think it’s going to be terribly nice.

DP: And is housing what you’d want that land right there on the prom to be used for? Or would you prefer that to be something else?

P: At the end of the day developers are going to build what they want.

P: They want the most money and the Council obviously need the money to come in to develop, they’ll want the highest bidder I would imagine, you know and the highest bidder is going to be the one, as the gentleman said, the one that’ going to put as many flats or whatever as they can cos they’ll get more money back.

P: Can there not be a restriction on it, you know, they couldn’t build so high or it’s got to be certain colours or because of where it is.

DP: Absolutely, this is genuinely a conversation about what would happen here and as I said after this there is a placemaking exercise where there will be further discussion about what would be located where, various different heights of buildings so although there may, and again I haven’t seen the individual proposals to be able to comment on this but there is definitely opportunity to influence what building are where on the site and heights of buildings in various different places. So it isn’t necessarily a given that you would have an 8 storey block of flats right on the promenade. Infact the purpose of this group is to find out what the reaction is to those lots of different options that are possible.

P: So once those plans are in are you having more consultations with the public?

DP: Absolutely, yes. The preferred bidder would have further conversations like this, probably some open events as well then following on from that there would be a formal planning application which would say this is what we’re proposing to do, this is why, the factors we’ve taken into account and then … the formal panning process voted on by Council and approved

P: The thing with Leith is that Leith have got all of these lovely waterfront flats but nobody from Leith lives in them they’re all outside people, cos as you say, half a million, you’re not going to get a lot of people moving to half a million pound houses so you’ll get people from outside with a bit of money coming in you know the locals then get pushed out a wee bit so you’re talking about affordable housing you know it would have to be down to the percentage, is it going to be down to ten percent or fifty percent or…

DP: Do you mean in terms of the cost or do you mean in terms of the …

P: Yeah cos if you’re talking about half a million pound houses it’s going to be people from outside I would suggest who have got money even from maybe down south or other parts of Edinburgh who’ll be buying these.

DP: It’s definitely the case that nothing like half a million pounds could be considered an affordable house and as I said it would probably be some combination of housing association or council rented properties and cheaper properties that would be available to buy.

P: but you wouldn’t know percentage wise at the moment?

DP: Oh, much much cheaper than that would be the only thing that would make sense. I mean there is no absolutely hard-line definition of what an affordable house actually is but that’s not affordable so.

P: It makes sense if rich people are buying the best properties and then the extra money will benefit the people living here, if there is a benefit then that’s fine, if there’s not then that’s not good.

DP: Ok, thinking about transport and public transport and parking within the site. The parking site which is currently for Tumbles customers is about 50 spaces and as I said regardless of what happens that 50 spaces need to be available somewhere else on the site. It won’t be there, we can be pretty much sure of that but otherwise developers have been asked to keep additional parking to a minimum on the site. How do you feel about that?

P: That’s… if they’re making flats and keeping the parking limited then you’re just going to have overspill right up the road.

P: With it being on a slope as well, if Tumbles stayed down the bottom and the flats were up the top end or vice versa if Tumbles did come up would there be any option for underground parking at the very sort of top half where it is on that slope cos that again could help with a big parking issue. Cos if you drive out of there there’s nowhere else you can park cos every other street is crammed with cars, so could that be an option?

DP: I can’t answer to the specifics, I know that’s something that people in another group have also suggested.

P: There needs to be some parking for the flats cos it is limited anyway and if the extra cars come it’s going to…

P: It’s going to cause chaos

P: Kings Road is always busy as well. It’s not as if… you know if you can’t park in your own street here, you’ll be parking miles away from your house.

P: The only thing is thought if you’re doing underground parking then that’s again adding on more storeys to however many blocks they’re thinking about doing so you know, they need to be careful as well but underground parking is obviously a good way cos it gets it out the way and everyone will get a space but again you want to make sure that it is going to be a nice building, not too high up, I don’t like the idea of huge high rise building to be honest. I don’t know if they could do it in a way, like the building, is it there (points at map) they’ve sort of got them sloped, so it is high up and then it goes down so it’s not as bad, it’s not all one big block like a big square block.

P: Yes, they should do something like that it’d be good yeah…

DP: How do other people feel about that, some sort of notion of increasing height as you move away from the promenade?

P: I think it makes it look nicer as well, it’s not just one, it gives it a bit…

P: Character

P: You’d probably have to like once they get the plans like show architects ideas and drawings of what they have in mind cos I think definitely having it sloped would look better than huge big blocks of housing.

P: At the minute at the Pitz thought the top two pitches are higher up, so you would have to level it up the way rather than level it down the way, cos if you levelled it down the way you’d have a hell of a hike up to the high street wouldn’t you.

DP: Yes, again, little bit more detail than I would have around what would be proposed there but I know that there is certainly the possibility of level access to whatever is on the high street, that may be Tumbles that may be retail that may be offices that sort of commercial element there.

P: See at the other side is that where there’s tenements already where it says 9 and 10 (on the map)? You know cos that sides obviously, the new flat isn’t it (points to map) I’m sure that’s the old tenement that looks out to the front, so because that’s there I wonder if developers then say well that’s already there, you know, the height, so can they then, you know, go as high as that, even thought the other flats the other side are lower. Can they then put a bid in to get high flats as high as that because its already there?

DP: Well absolutely, they could apply for more or less any height that they wanted in terms of what’s likely to be awarded… I’m not a planning officer, my understanding is that local heights of buildings are taken into account for new planning, new developments so that could certainly be influential for that yes. Would you think of four storeys as being too high on the promenade then?

P: I just like the flat on the other side, like this girl said, you know it is modern but it’s got a nice feel as you walk along its not to…you know…

P: They look like holiday homes, they’re like something you’d see abroad.

P: Cos of the balconies? (laughs)

DP: Do you think of that as good or bad?

P: It is good but when do you ever get the weather in Scotland to enjoy it. Especially see if they do build high rise that areas going to be sort of shaded when it’s sunny.

DP: Ok, Sorry, I don’t know that we got anything in terms of transport. Any concerns about public transport? Any concerns about traffic?

P: Yes, the traffic is definitely going to increase one way or another if you put that in. And it is really bad at the moment, especially tea time traffic and that.

P: It is really unavoidable isn’t it, just up at Kings Road especially in the morning and at rush hour times so…

P: Putting more houses is going to make it even worse as it is

P: Plus also there’s schools in that are so, I don’t know what the speed is, I don’t drive, I don’t have a car but I know rad safety is a big thing at the moment in schools so cos obviously there’s going to be a lot more traffic and a lot of the children use the high street to get to school, so I think that’s going to need to be taken into consideration as well.

P: Also the junction here (points to map) is really really busy already so if there’s going to be more people it would be nice if there was going to be something done cos I wait along here so often and if it gets worse it’s going to be a nightmare.

P: We need more frequent public transport as well, more coming into the area. I know it’s going to cause more traffic but if it’s going to be houses you’re going to have to…

P: I don’t even know if you could have lie a, up at Meadowbank for like congestion and traffic they’ve done a one way system now so cars can’t keep going along and coming, there’s a lot more lanes to come into the town and a lot more lanes to go out of the town. And I know, it’s not as big as there but even something like that saying you can’t go all down that one way, just to try and with the traffic, saying like this is a bit where you come down, and I know the bit near Baileyfield you could put that’s to take you out?

P: What up to the motorway, yes, I know what you mean, you cut through and then

P: Harry Lauder Road…

P: Yes, just thinking obviously about scenarios that you could do

P: If you’re sending all the traffic up in a one way system it’s going to be even busier…

P: That whole area is going to be so busy.

P: And there’s more flats everywhere now, these aren’t even finished. They’ve developed already all round Lidls

P: I think that’s a really big thing they’re going to have to think about, traffic

P: The area is well serviced with buses but the buses down here are always really busy, the 26, if you travel on that at rush hour you don’t get a seat. It’s virtually from town right down it is always busy, so I think more buses definitely but then obviously, that’s going to have the impact on the traffic in the high street and any car users.

P: One way or another we’re not winning

P: It’s a difficult one cos when they changed the roundabout and put the traffic lights in it helped but there’s still such a busy flow of traffic coming in from either Harry Lauder Road down from East Lothian and then coming in from the Leith side as well so it is… there’s no real solution to the traffic unfortunately. Parking I think is going to be the big thing.

P: Yeh, I think they should just not build too many flats. Obviously, that is good land for housing but they shouldn’t build too much or overdo it where they’re all crammed in. They need to be sensible about it but I think having Tumbles there is a good idea but I that even on the prom if maybe a restaurant or a café, cos I know they’ve opened up a few along by the amusements and they’ve been really popular and I suppose that would attract more tourists as well cos they’ve got the amusements and the promenade is such a nice area. Even in the winter just looking out on the beach if they had a glass window and a nice restaurant, they’ve not got a big restaurant in this area, or a wee ice cream shop, play park and then you’ve got Tumbles and then housing at the back.

P: Even holiday homes, you’ve not got the worry about the extra traffic or the schools, I know the schools are really busy just now and local people are not going to struggle to get in you’re going to get strangers you know people that can afford them who don’t come from here but they get priority ????? as much as the people who lived here.

P: See the road from cat and Dog home, could they not make it into a public road, coming into Portobello that way? Seafield Road?

DP: The one that runs along the back?

P: Yeah, maybe make it a public road so you could come into Portobello that way.

P: a lot of people still walk along there with their dogs and things so you might get a bit of kick back on that cos it is kind of taking away part of the beach as well isn’t it, well not the beach but the promenade as well.

P: Maybe it would solve the traffic a little bit

P: Aye if its helping the traffic, anything to help the traffic, I just think that…

P: The thing you’re saying about holiday lets, you get a lot of people on the buy to let market now cos you can rent out your house for a festival and make 2 grand, it’s just going to be an investment opportunity for somebody rather than a facility for Portobello, I’d say. There’s always that worry, you’ve got to be sure who’s going to live there.

P: Maybe a clause in a contract? Saying that they can’t do that.

P: Mhmm, no buy to lets or something

DP: So no holiday lets in that particular area?

P: Mhmm

P: The promenade is such an asset that they’ve got to be careful that they don’t make the situation worse

P: Or spoil it

P: It’s the best thing about Portobello really

P: I don’t think it needs a retail park, you know how you said the option would be like sort of retail units

P: Or offices, nah I really don’t like the idea of offices

P: You’ve got Fort Kinnaird just up the Road. My mother in law, she’s at Chesser and they’ve just put the wee units in there and the traffic is appalling up there now, just to get into the houses at the Corn Exchange and that’s just my vision now of sitting there for ages constantly at the traffic lights and they just change, one car at a time so I think that again, that would just create more traffic again and there’s no real requirement for more shops we’ve got everything on our doorstep here really.

P: If they had shops or restaurants they have to have parking as well so you’re back to parking.

P: And it’s hard enough at the moment to get parked to go to any of the restaurants or even at the prom, you’ve got to go and walk from wherever which is fine if it’s a nice day but…

P: The parking area they’ve got the now is really good, I’ve never had to look for a space or wait for a space when I go to Tumbles or anything like that, there is a good majority of parking there but probably like decreasing that, but as you say it’s still 50 spaces though isn’t it

P: I think when it’s a nice day it is always packed cos people park their car there when they go to the beach. You’ll never get a space when it’s a nice day. So, I take it would it be permits maybe to park your car there if they build houses or you could have random people coming to the beach just parking their spaces.

P: [inaudible] they wouldn’t be happy just anybody parking in their street basically.

P: So if you’ve got Tumbles and you’ve got to have the 50 parking spaces is that included if they were building housing would they need to then build more parking spaces for the houses?

DP: Yes, I mean the guidance that we’ve put out to developers is that we want to keep additional parking to minimum but there hasn’t been a specific number associated with that and again because it is all different types of developments it might be variable depending on whether it is commercial or residential.

P: If you were doing flats and you could do underground parking, I don’t know, however many flats, if you only got one space I don’t know how it would work but yeah obviously if you’re keeping the parking for Tumbles as you’re saying when it is busy at the beach just everyone parks there it’s just going to be so busy. So obviously if you were doing flats you’d need to make sure everyone would have a space cos if they’re living there, there’s nowhere to park their car.

P: If it is residential it is family homes, imagine how many cars per house

P: I think the Council though, they’re trying to drive people onto public transport but they’re not really car friendly, they’d prefer people didn’t have cars

P: but to be honest I think the bus system that we have in Edinburgh compared to other cities is really good.

P: It’s award winning yes

P: The 26 the 15 the 49, they all go into town, a lot of people if they are from Portobello and they work in town you can get there in the morning in 40mins to an hour, you can get into town for work and the buses are good, we do have a lot and for coming down to the beach from other areas outside of town, it is good, so maybe it a good idea just having one parking space per flat then that encourages people to get the bus or even walk, cos we do have stuff, shops in the area, it’s not like we’re in the middle of nowhere.

DP: How do you feel about what we call active travel? So, cycling, walking, roller skating…

Group: Laughter

P: I walk a lot of places cos I don’t drive, or the bus

DP: What is walking like in Portobello or getting into town?

P: I think it’s good I’ll get the bus into town, it’s not far in a taxi either, if I’m on a walk I’ll walk along the beach or sometimes I’ll walk from my house up to Arthur’s Seat, I like walking round the area, it’s a nice place to live so…that’s just me, just cos I don’t drive and I’m not going to drive for a while so…

DP: Ok, any cyclists in the group?

P: When I parked my car it was an effort walking up those stairs…

Group: Laughter

P: Would there be any option for the residential area being like the pedestrianised areas where you’re not allowed traffic, you’re not allowed cars in there? Or there’s a restriction to only certain flats have got parking spaces attached to them? I’m just thinking of a way to prevent any additional cars. It’s potentially going to be a lot of cars coming in there.

P: But then maybe saying that people are going to park in the Tumbles area because they have to have parking anyway, so if you were coming down and people were thinking we’re not allowed to park there we’ll just go into Tumbles, so on the other side you might be worse off.

P: You might get the Council starting to put the wardens down, they’ve done it elsewhere, they’re moving out and out, they’re bound to get down here sooner or later.

DP: How do you feel about that?

P: Traffic wardens?

Group: Laughter

P: Not in front of a mixed crowd

Group: Laughter

DP: Ok, so again, Tumbles just briefly there, does anyone have any preference as to whether or not Tumbles is moved from its current position?

P: No, as long as it is in that facility. My view is if it is there or where the Pitz or pitches are. As long as it is moved and we’ve got the same area and size.

P: But if they make it look the same as what it is, a big white metal sheet building on the high street it wouldn’t look very nice.

DP: I don’t know specifically but is that a concern?

P: If you’re going along Portobello High Street and you saw that

P: Make the building a bit nicer…

P: Plus you’ll get all the bus exhaust and all that, it won’t be very nice. It’d be better for the kids to get the fresh air off the Forth rather than the fumes off the 26

P: It’s definitely not going to be on the prom, it’s going to move

P: Just as long as they have the Tumbles there because it is such a good thing to have, the soft play and gymnastics and the café, it is always busy every time I go so I think if they’re going to move it they should keep that one open until they’ve built the other one. And then open that and then if they start building the flats down at the front… as long as that’s there cos if you shut it for a year or so, imagine f they just knock everything down and leave it, you’re really going to miss it cos there’s nothing else in Portobello

P: At the same time if they’re building flats there right beside Tumbles, for health and safety and for building will they not have to shut that because they’re so close proximity together there could be a lot of accidents, so they might have to shut it, unless they start taking this away first but you would think developers would want to start with the flats first cos that’s where the money is coming from, I think they’ll shut it down for a wee while

P: The pitches will take no time to get rid of…It’ll just be a question of levelling off the site

P: It’s a shame if they just strip the whole land and just leave it. Obviously building takes s long as it takes but sometimes they can go over the time and then you’ve taken away that whole land and you’re missing everything so I think they just need to be wary of that

P: I think as well if you’re brining Tumbles up to the front of the street, adding maybe something else on beside it, doesn’t have to be massive but something for the older kids, just to weigh up taking the football pitches and stuff away, such a big area you’re taking away for a lot of people, obviously you don’t want big pitches there but something. Obviously Tumbles in only for the kids maybe 10yrs and younger, if that so something to add on especially for the community, thinking yous have took that concern away, having something else for the older kids to do would be quite a nice idea.

P: If you’re rebuilding you may as well add something else on. They’re got the café maybe making the café bigger making it nice…

P: Computers in or something for kids to go on cos I know a lot of kids go to the football pitches and go on to the indoor bit as well inside and do

P: It’s also used as a venue for parties and weddings, anniversary things

P: Even a wee hall or something that could be added and used for different things during the year, value for everybody, it would be a nice idea.

P: See if they do put Tumbles up the top is there any chance of that being made into an Edinburgh Leisure or tennis courts/football pitches?

DP: Probably not and that’s just because of the amount of space that any sort of outdoor facility would actually take up

P: Do you think the Council would think like if they got a good bid for all the land they’ll end up closing Tumbles altogether and the gymnastics and moving everything to Meadowbank, is that what they might do?

DP: No, Tumbles will definitely stay on that site

P: How much pressure are the Council under to take the highest bid? As you say you’ve got spending earmarked for Meadowbank

DP: I would say that this sale does not completely pay for Meadowbank, so it is not the case that we’re likely to get any surplus over the top it’s that we need to find additional funding for that as well

P: But the higher the price you get for this the smaller the surplus and the higher the price the more they’ll want to get in to get a buck back

DP: It is definitely a balance of things there’s no doubt about it, the Council will, just to make a good deal the Council will want to get the highest bid they possibly can from this but there is definitely room for manoeuvre in what that bid looks like and I don’t know how close any of the bids are so maybe not necessarily the highest bid that it goes for is there’s a much better offer in some other aspects of that proposal

P: But you might get a really good bid with lots of facilities for 5 million and somebody else wants to cram it full of houses for 20 million so what one are you likely to take

DP: Well luckily that’s not my decision to take

Group: Laughter…

DP: But I think that you’ve understood this situation that we’re in pretty well and you know, the Council will through the planning process and through the placemaking process obviously try to get the best community benefit they can out of the site so it is a total thing, yes there’s a cash amount but yes there’s a community benefit as well.

P: How long is it until the next process roughly?

DP: Well, the decision on the sale, a recommendation should be made in December and the Council should make its decision… I think it is January, so following on from that would be a placemaking exercise with the preferred developer and then after that a planning application and then after that development would actually start. It is very difficult for me to be in a position to say specifically anything [inaudible] at this time. I would think wouldn’t be possible that anything could happen by before, by spring of next year. Essentially you’d still be talking about administrative processes until then.

P: So when does the Pitz close completely?

DP: We don’t know, we haven’t got a time for that. I wouldn’t want to give you a false assurance that they will try to run this for as long as they can but given that it’s a business I would imagine that’s probably what they will try to do.

P: See in terms of the consultation, is this it? Or will you have another one maybe when you’ve got say 2 or 3 different proposals in and let people have an input there?

DP: No, there wouldn’t be any multiple proposals that would go forward so the process is that the group would recommend a single developer and the Council will, in all likelihood, accept that recommendation. That single developer will come back to the community with an outline proposal of what it is talking about and there will be some negotiation some input as to various different elements of that. So that’s what we call placemaking exercise so this isn’t the only opportunity for feedback but there would never be a process where you’d see three different options and we ask you to select this developer rather than these two other developers.

P: That’s a shame

Group: Laughter…

P: That’d be interesting eh?

P: I think you would probably know you would get the one that was best for the community rather than the highest price

DP: Well, maybe, but there’s obviously a lot of cost in terms of development and architect’s fees for developers in terms of putting forward a plan so you might not get everyone interested in spending six months with a site they might not actually get…

P: It’s going to be there a long time, once you put it up I don’t think it’ll be coming back down again

DP: So, that was Tumbles, actually open space is the next thing I wanted to talk to you about so what we have on the site at the moment is actually a number of areas that are currently designated as being open space. Now the football pitches, even though they are not freely accessible are designated as being open space. And the Figgate burn and some of the land next to the Figgate burn is also designated as being open space, now there are technicalities that are involved in what developers then need to do. So a developer who has open space on their site needs to be able to say as part of the planning process how they’ve taken that into account and what they’ve done to preserve that open space in their final plan. So there’s a number of different things that a developer could do, one of the things that the Council has specifically asked for is for a walkway, a pedestrian walkway to be developed along the Figgate burn to open that space up and that would link the high street to the prom along there and essentially they’ve asked them to take into account that there is open space on the site and see how that would be reflected as well. So, what sort of open space would you want the developer to include on that site and as well how do you feel about that Figgate burn development there?

P: I think a nice park would be nice, specially when it’s nice for the kids and stuff, if it was an open space and they had that area

DP: So if you’re thinking about an open area would you be thinking about a grassed area or a sort of plaza area, or would you be thinking about a play area? What sort of thing would you be thinking about?

P I wouldn’t say grassed

P: Just a play area

P: Yeah, just probably, this tarmac sort of stuff, soft rubber stuff for the playground and maybe slides and shoots and whatever it doesn’t have to be massive but if you’re including an open area, especially for the weather there they get

P: And they’re going to have a path beside the Figgate burn?

DP: Yes, so that would run from here (points to map) right down to the promenade.

P: But they’ve already got the little wall and you can already walk down there

P: Is that to the right-hand side of the water though? So, you’ve got the pub on the corner so you’ve got the street there so would that be sort of in the Pitz at the moment sort of down that way?

DP: Essentially the Pitz sort of stop along here and then you’ve got some land that runs along the strip there which is currently all fenced off and inaccessible, so what’s being talked about is to make that into a walkway that would run the full length

P: So it’s not going to be a closed walkway? So there’s not going to be a building there and a building there? (points to map) It’s going to be quite open?

DP: Is that one of the concerns?

P: Well just for safety, if it is a short enclosed walkway I just think it can, it makes me think someone could get mugged there…

P: I don’t think that’s a good idea…You’ve already got that open street there just where the pub is on the corner, so it’s not like you’ve got a huge big space and you’ve got to walk all round here to get to the beach, you’ve just got maybe, literally a two minute walk along here and down anyway…

P: but if it’s open I understand so people can see each other but a, closed walkway I just think…

P: But how big are you talking? Cos if it’s like a little narrow…. especially down to the beach at night. That’s quiet anyway at night, walking down there…

P: When it’s dark especially

P: On winter night’s I think that’s just a bit… and plus it’s like a river aswell…so it’s a bit… yeah

P: I think if you’re putting new houses there though, quite a wide sort of grass and walkway if it was well lit would be quite nice if the houses, if you’ve got a wee bit of space into the house so at least you’ve got the peace of mind that if you’re walking down there there’s a good chance people in the house are going to see you walking towards the beach, so it is well lit and had that safe feeling to it.

P: I was just thinking it would be nice to have benches but again you’d have to have open spaces, you couldn’t be sitting looking into someone’s living room. You’d need something to look at you know, make it quite visually pleasing.

P: I would have just said like if they’re doing the flats at the back having terrace bits with a rooftop terrace but probably that’s going to be too expensive and that’s probably what’ll make houses more expensive you know if they’ve got the nice views you know like their doing on the new St Jameses, those houses there, I mean they’re going to cost a lot because they’re now going to have a rooftop terrace bit. That would be nice but, I suppose if you’re buying houses there because you’ve got the view of the sea but again making them affordable.

P: If it was holiday lets and stuff they’d probably do it.

P: If there was some more expensive ones, as long as you’ve got the ones that are affordable so that people who live in Portobello are still going to be able to live in Portobello rather than people from in town and they’re just wanting to come down to a nice area because they can afford it rather than the people that live in Portobello.

DP: So you mentioned rooftop terraces there because we were talking about open space, how do you feel about green buildings, so these are things like grass rooftops or having living planted sides to buildings, is this something that you would be interested in?

P: I’d really like a rooftop restaurant

P: That’s something that we’re missing and that would bring in a lot of money cos apart from your small cafes and you’ve a few Chinese and Indian restaurants but you’ve not really got a big restaurant.

P: They’ve got one up at George Street and you up and it’s like a rooftop and it is all glass and it’s a restaurant and that becomes really popular cos you can see right across the city where if you’ve got one there you’re seeing right across the ocean

P: That’s a good idea to have…cos they’ve got further along they’ve got the Espy and the cafes there so you’ve got your sort of summer cafes but a restaurant you could go to at night, that would be used all year round, I’m sure it would make a lot of money

DP: Anything else? Any other suggestions for open space on the site? I suppose the question I would have as well is how do you feel about trees?

P: Probably not, cos it’s really dark at the Pitz, it’s all trees so if you’re wanting light…

P: See I would like that I think bring the nature in a bit so it’s not all like we’re in stone buildings everywhere, kind of brighten it up a bit.

P: A rose garden or something?

P: Maybe a nice garden yeah…

P: Good thing with trees is they absorb the carbon dioxide from the air so they’ll clean the air as well so…

DP: Is air quality a particular concern? We talked about traffic earlier on…

P: I think it’s just because you’re at the beach and you’re at the sea and you think you know, it’s nice so putting cars and whatever in to it…

P: A grassy area keeps in with the theme, the beach and stuff you can just continue walking…

P: A wee picnic area maybe?

P: I just think that they just need to watch that they don’t put too many flats there. I know that that’s what they’re wanting to make the money because the more flats the higher the are the more space they use the more money they’re going to make but they really need to think about what people are wanting and I think having a café, a restaurant, a nice green area a playpark plus Tumbles cos you’ve still got a lot of space for building houses there anyway, plus there’s loads of houses they’ve just built up here (points to map) plus they’re building loads in the area so I think they just need to watch that they don’t overdo it on that, I think that’s everyone’s point.

P: I think with the flats as well I would find it more appealing to have a park and an open area and maybe a nice restaurant beside you, you’re right beside the beach. For me personally I would find it more appealing to buy a house there with them than just all houses everywhere.

P: What we don’t want is just a huge stone block in the whole area and a tiny bit for Tumbles and then that’s it.

P: That part of Portobello is quite drab anyway…

P: Mmhmm, it is all houses

P: You know what I mean… when you’re looking over so it would be nice to brighten it up and carry what they’re doing already…

DP: Ok, I think we’ve mostly addressed this but when we’re talking about what might be built along I suppose the main route here, the promenade and the high street, we’ve talked about what we might want to see on the promenade does anyone have any particular views on what you might want to see along the high street side of that, what that side of the development should look like?

P: I think the Tumbles is a good idea there, because if you think there’s just shops, flats where a nice building right across… I think it’s a good idea moving that up.

P: And having the doorway right off the high street so you’re literally just walking right in…

P: Yeah, especially for buses people are right there, they’re not having to go through flats or anything so for that part I would say it is quite a good idea putting Tumbles up a bit more.

P: But then if the developers do put it up there they’re not going to make it look nice cos they’re going to want to make it as cheap as possible so they can make money, personally that’s what I think. I don’t think they’re going to make a big nice building cos that’ll cost more…

P: Then if they’re spending all that money on the development they want people to buy the houses so they’d want to make it all look appealing.

P: At the end of the day they’re going to do what they’re going to do. I mean we’ve all got our ideas, I’ve got my idea of how it would look like a nice glass building restaurant, rooftop terrace, nice flats that are affordable, having Tumbles and then still a little greenspace but probably what’s going to happen is it’s just going to be lots of flats. Cos that’s just going to make the most money so…

P: Eight storey high flats

P: Like another big block

P: Ten parking spaces…

Group: Laughter

P: Do you know how many developers have put ideas in?

DP: Again, I wouldn’t hold me to this as I haven’t seen them but I believe we’ve had nineteen developers express interest

P: Is that high or….

DP: I have absolutely no idea

P: You don’t know if the developers are local? You wouldn’t know that?

DP: Oh no, I don’t know who the developers are

P: Just cos you’d think if they’re local they might have more of a view on it and think…

P: They might care what the community wants….

P: I do think Portobello’s becoming a much nicer area though just, it’s got that village vibe and got all the shops it’s not just huge supermarkets and that’s it, it has got the delis and the butchers…

P: It’s got as much as you need but they’re not overdoing it

P: And if they did something on the high street like the [inaudible] cos it’s no as busy at that end so it would cheer it up a bit, which would be quite good. Cos you’re so near the main roads as well so something that’s bringing it back into the main street.

P: And especially with Tumbles, I know people from Portobello know it but not a lot of people, when I’ve had friends come from the city and they say ‘where is Tumbles, where is that?’ whereas if it is on the street, a lot more people see it and think oh what is that and it might make it a lot busier as well as putting it right down the bottom.

P: Will it stay named Tumbles or could they change the name if they wanted?

DP: Well, it’ll still be a Council building and be run by Edinburgh Leisure so we’ve always had the option to call it whatever we want, I don’t know that there’s any suggestion that it would change but it might.

P: And will just be soft play or will it still be gymnastics, will they add different things in it or…

DP: Well it needs to, taking on board the suggestions that we’ve had that we might add some other community facilities to it, what has been said so far is that it must replicate exactly what is there at the moment in terms of facilities so there has actually been a list of literally all of the equipment that Tumbles currently has and all of the activities that are performed there and that’s been provided to developers.

P: Ah cos they do like gym nippers for little toddlers and different classes and stuff

DP: Well the classes themselves that wouldn’t be for the developers to do that would be Edinburgh Leisure and the Council but in terms of the facilities they have to be replicated as they are at the moment.

P: And the size of the building, could the size of the building change?

P: Is it a case of one or the other, like the flats and then maybe a sports centre as well? Or a sports centre and no flats?

DP: Well I don’t think a sports centre is likely to show up as one of these, as far as I’m aware there’s no…

P: Aye but can’t a sports centre have Tumbles built into it sort of thing

DP: I can’t see it, again the Council owns Tumbles and Edinburgh leisure intends to continue running Tumbles if there was a sports facility built there I don’t know that the Council would be running that and I don’t know what the developers incentive would be to build that. And again, just sort of managing expectations based on the guidance that I’ve been given by my colleagues in property etc it is unlikely that you’d be looking at something like that.

P: So you’re saying like for like at the moment

DP: Again, the community benefit element certainly doesn’t preclude what we’ve been talking about in terms of some sort of community room or some sort of expansion to Tumbles that allows additional activities to take place there, that’s definitely not impossible but if we’re talking about a whole new facilities that would represent a sports complex or something that’s probably not affordable.

P: It would still be the Council anyway but it’s just that Portobello gym is quite expensive anyway compared with Pure gym or something for memberships, it’s nearly double which is ridiculous.

DP: I didn’t know there actually was a gym in Portobello.

P: It’s quite small though

P: The Portobello baths, just along the prom, there’s a gym there…

P: And they do classes but if you’re doing a membership for that or just even for a month or whatever, its double the money if not more than what you would if you were joining you know a Pure gym of something.

P: The other thing with your Tumbles on the high street it would have to be secure obviously, cos you wouldn’t want any random just wandering in, you know if you’ve got gyms next to it as well you would need to keep them two separate for the security of the kids.

DP: So, that’s all the questions that I wanted to run through with you today, Julie was there anything else you wanted to ask?

JD: No thanks

DP: Is there any other concerns or issues about the development anything that we’ve not touched on today that you’d want to raise?

Group: No

DP: A very general question but taking everything we’ve discussed into account how do you feel about the sale of the Westbank Street site?

P: Gutted, just because of the football pitches

P: Well, I didn’t use them and I think well if boys want to go and play football well there is a lot of parks and greenspace and the beach and stuff, there is a lot of spaces they can go and plus if Meadowbank’s going to be built I think it’s fine cos every time I’ve gone past in the past couple of years anyway it’s never been as busy so it is a good idea it’s being sold but cos there is a lot of flats the only thing is just making sure there’s not too many

P: It’s needing to be brought up a bit, it needs a facelift at that end of Portobello, I think it’s quite exciting

P: They’ve got Aldi there and that’s new and the new flats

P And they’ve done that nice, plenty parking spaces they’re not crammed, looks a nice shop and it’s right at the end so I think it’ll be good, especially if there’s a restaurant at the top

P: I think regardless, traffics going to be a nightmare regardless of what goes there.

P: Yeah, I think just the traffic in Edinburgh is just going to be a problem everywhere. I think if they do it right it’ll be good it’ll be a nice thing for Portobello but

P: Definitely, specially an open green area and stuff

P: Bring back the open air pool that’s what I say

Group: Laughter

P: I think it’s reassuring to know that Tumbles is going to be there cos the Evening News report yesterday said that Tumbles was shutting down, it was on Facebooks Evening News page and the amount of comments that were against it with people absolutely gutted about it saying that it is shocking and it is the only soft play area in this area so it’s reassuring that it is either going to remain there, which is unlikely or it will move and it will be brand spanking new which is great

DP: I hadn’t seen that

P: Yeah that was just yesterday, I think it is reassuring because the facility will still be there and if it moves it’s only going to improve it I would imagine… but aye traffic… parking spaces… I’ll never move my car again! It’ll sit outside my house as an ornament otherwise I’d never get a parking space again.

P: It’s good that you’re listening to local people as well I think but hopefully it’ll be worth it what feedback you’re getting

DP: Certainly, from my perspective it’s been really interesting listening to all the different views today, we pass these on to people who’ll be involved in making the decision that’s what my team does. So I want to thank you all for coming along today.